



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Apostle Islands
National Lakeshore

415 Washington Avenue
Bayfield, Wisconsin 54814

715 779-3397 phone
715 779-3049 fax

Apostle Islands News Release

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Contact(s): Jim Nepstad
Phone number: (715) 779- 3398, x102
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Sand and York Islands to be Closed This Fall

The National Park Service (NPS) has temporarily closed Sand and York Islands to public hunting beginning September 12, 2009, and will temporarily close both islands to all public use beginning September 28, 2009. These closures will remain in effect through May 15, 2010. The NPS will be continuing deer reduction efforts on these islands during that time. All other islands in the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore will remain open to public hunting under the usual state and federal rules.

"For the past two years, we have been closing Sand and York Islands starting in November," said Apostle Islands National Lakeshore Acting Superintendent Jim Nepstad. "Damage caused by overabundant deer on these two islands has grown serious enough that we can no longer afford to wait that late in the season to do our reduction work."

Deer reduction efforts on Sand and York Islands have been ongoing since the fall of 2007, following the recommendations of a wildlife management plan approved earlier that year. The effort is aimed at preserving plant communities that were once very common in the Great Lakes region, but are now very rare due to high deer populations. The Apostle Islands are among the last places where the understory of the original Great Lakes forests is still intact, allowing intriguing glimpses of the forests that covered the region hundreds of years ago.

Trained marksmen with specialized equipment and tactics will be employed in the effort this fall. In a pilot test on Sand Island last May, a single marksman was able to remove as many deer in two nights as public hunters removed from both islands in six weeks during the fall of 2008.

"Hunting is still a perfectly appropriate activity in the Apostle Islands," continued Nepstad. "But the problem on these two islands has gotten so severe that we have to intensify the effort."

As in the past, deer removed from these islands will be donated to local food banks. More than 600 pounds of venison was donated during NPS efforts in the spring of 2009.

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